

## Message Text

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ACTION PER-05

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7982  
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 1757

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NG

SUBJECT: PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS, MAY 30, 1974

SUMMARY: AT SHORT BUT CORRECT CEREMONY, I PRESENTED MY CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE, MORNING, MAY 30. AT CONCLUSION OF CEREMONY, KOUNTCHE HELD FORTH BRIEFLY ON GON'S PRIORITIES AND PLANS, DICUSSED DROUGHT PROBLEMS AND NEED FOR STRONGER PRIVATE SECTOR, CRITICIZING FRENCH ROLE THEREIN. ATOMOSPHERE WAS CORDIAL, BUT KOUNTCHE IS COMPLICATED INDIVIDUAL WHO WILL TAKE CAREFUL HANDLING. END SUMMARY.

1. AT STRAIGHTFORWARD AND CORRECT CEREMONY LASTING APPROXIMATELY HALF HOUR, I PRESENTED MY CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE MORNING MAY 30, EXACTLY TWO WEEKS AFTER MY ARRIVAL. SOME LOCAL OBSERVERS SEEMED TO THINK GON TOOK INORDINATELY LONG TIME TO SCHEDULE EVENT, BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE ANY SIGNIFICANCE SHOULD BE READ INTO MATTER. THIS BEING THE FIRST OCCASION OF THIS NATURE TO BE ORGANIZED BY NEW REGIME, IT WAS FACED WITH PROBLEM OF DECIDING WHETHER TO CONTINUE PRACTICES OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH IT WISHED TO DISOSSOCIATE ITSELF OR TO MODIFY THEM. IT FINALLY DECIDED TO PROCEED AS BEFORE.

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CEREMONY INVOLVED CUSTOMARY EVENTS INCLUDING HONOR GUARD,

BOTH NATIONAL ANTHEMS BY MILITARY BAND, WHICH FEATURED RATHER IMAGINATIVE RENDITION OF OUR ANTHEM, AND EXCHANGE OF PREPARED REMARKS (TEXTS BY AIRGRAM). MAJORITY OF CABINET MINISTERS WERE PRESENT. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DCM BUCHE, ACTING AID DIRECTOR HILL AND PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR EKSTROM. AS PLEASANT AND HOSPITABLE GESTURE, OUR WIVES ALSO INVITED.

2. MY REMARKS (STATE 090664 NOTAL) FOCUSED ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS AND REFERRED TO OUR OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR RELATIONS WITH NIGER AND TO PROGRAMS UNDERWAY FOR BOTH IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESOLVING COUNTRY'S MANY PROBLEMS. KOUNTCHE MADE POINT OF THANKING US FOR ITS ASSISTANCE AND GOOD WILL AND THEN WENT ON TO WISH SECRETARY KISSINGER WELL IN HIS EFFORTS IN MIDDLE EAST, TO CALL ATTENTION TO GROWING DISPARITY IN ECONOMIC WELL-BEING BETWEEN LDC'S AND INDUSTRIAL NATIONS, COMPLICATED BY WIDENING GAP BETWEEN PRICES OF RAW MATERIALS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS, TO EXPRESS HOPE THAT NEW INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE EVOLVED TO HELP MINIMIZE PROBLEMS OF LDC'S AND, FINALLY, TO URGE US TO USE ITS INFLUENCE WITH SOUTH AFRICA TO BRING TO AN END IT DISCRIMINATORY RACIAL POLICIES.

3. AFTER CEREMONY, SCHEDULE CALLED FOR A BRIEF PERIOD OF SMALL TALK, BUT KOUNTCHE SEEMS INCAPABLE OF SUCH PASTIME AND TOOK ME ASIDE FOR TOUR D'HORIZON WHICH MIGH HAVE GONE ON FOR SOME TIME IF PROTOCOL PEOPLE HAD NOT BROKEN IT UP AFTER ABOUT 15 MINUTES. ONLY LIGHT MOMENT WAS COMMENT BY KOUNTCHE REGARDING "TYRANNY" OF PROTOCOL OFFICERS.

4. KOUNTCHE'S MONOLOGUE COVERED FOLLOWING:

A) SITE FOR CREDENTIALS CEREMONY: IN KEEPING WITH AUSTERITY OF NEW REGIME, KOUNTCHE SAID HE PREFERRED TO RECEIVE ME IN HIS OFFICE BUT HAVING HEARD THAT RUMORS WERE CIRCULATING IN EMBASSIES AND FOREIGN COMMUNITY HERE SUGGESTING THAT GOVERNMENT COULD NOT HOLD CEREMONY IN PRESIDENTIAL PALACE BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN BADLY SHOT UP DURING COUP, HE HAD DECIDED ON SAME CEREMONY AS PREVIOUS REGIME IN PRESIDENTIAL PALACE TO DISPELL THESE RUMORS AND SO THAT ONE AND ALL COULD SEE THAT PALACE WAS, IN FACT, CONFIDENTIAL

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IN EXCELLENT CONDTION. COMMENT: ROOMS OF PALACE WE SAW WERE IN EXCELLENT AND SPOTLESS CONDITION AND WERE EITHER NOT SCENE OF ANY STRIFE OR HAD RECEIVED REMARKABLY RAPID REPAIR JOB.

B) DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS: KOUNTCHE HELD FORTH EMPHATICALLY ON THEME THAT NIGER SHOULD STAND ON ITS OWN FEET AND NOT BE DEPENDENT ON OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE. MEANWHILE HE

WAS GRATEFUL FOR OUR AID, WHICH HE RECOGNIZED COUNTRY NEEDED, BUT HE DEPLORED WHAT HE CALLED DIORI'S HIGH-HANDED AND PERSONAL RULE AND SAID COUNTRY BADLY NEEDED A WELL- ORGANIZED AND REALISTIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN. HE WAS ACCORDINGLY ASKING EXPERTS UNDER UN AUSPICES TO TAKE A LOOK AT SITUATION, AND PREPARE RATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR NIGER (SEE NIAMEY 1642).

D) DROUGHT: KOUNTCHE SAID HE DISAGREED WITH PAST GOVERNMENT'S DROUGHT POLICIES, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE AND CORRUPT. HE FELT ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIEF CENTERS WAS MISTAKE BECAUSE IT TOOK SEDENTARY FARMERS OFF LAND WHERE THEY BELONGED AND REDUCED NOMADS TO BEGGARS. FOR THESE REASONS, HE HAD INAUGURATED "RETURN TO LAND" PROGRAMS AND HOPED GRADUALLY TO DO AWAY WITH RELIEF CENTERS. AT SAME TIME, HE RECOGNIZED HE HAD NO READY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF NOMADS EXCEPT TO STRESS NIGER HAD ENOUGH PROBLEMS OF ITS OWN WITHOUT TAKING ON NOMAD REFUGEES FROM MALI, WHICH HE ESTIMATED TO COMPRISE BETWEEN 20 AND 50,000 PEOPLE. COMMENT: KOUNTCHE'S NATIONALISM IS SKIN DEEP.

D) DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND PRIVATE SECTOR: KOUNTCHE SAID HE RECOGNIZED IMPORTANT ROLE WHICH PRIVATE SECTOR PLAYED IN DEVELOPMENT OF US; AMERICAN COMPANIES WOULD BE WELCOMED TO HELP IN DEVELOPMENT AND EXPLOITATION OF NIGER'S MANY MINERAL AND OTHER RESOURCES, PROVIDED THEIR INTENTIONS WERE SERIOUS. HE CITED FRENCH CEMENT PLANT AS EXAMPLE OF HOW NOT TO DO BUSINESS IN NIGER. COUNTRY HAD ALL NATURAL RESOURCES NEEDED TO PRODUCE CEMENT, BUT BECAUSE OF OUTDATED EQUIPMENT WHICH FRENCH HAD DUMPED ON NIGER AND POOR MANAGEMENT POLICIES, FACTORY WAS BOTH FISCAL AND PRODUCTION DISASTER. KOUNTCHE WENT ON TO CRITICIZE FRENCH ACTIVITIES IN NIGER, CONFIDENTIAL

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STATING HE WAS NOT ANTI-FRENCH, BUT NIGER' INTERESTS NEEDED BETTER PROTECTION THAN FRENCH WERE PREPARED TO ACCORD.

5. COMMENT: ON FIRST IMPRESSION, KOUNTCHE STRIKES ONE AS AUSTERE, INTENSE AND SINGLE-MINDED INDIVIDUAL SOMEWHAT ILL AT EASE IN CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS OF THIS TYPE, BUT OTHERWISE, TOTALLY IN COMMAND OF SITUATION AND DEADLY SERIOUS. HE RARELY SMILES, IS MAN IN A HURRY AND IN CONTRAST TO SOME OF HIS MORE FLABBY MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATES, HE HAS TRIM FIGURE. A NATIONALIST AT HEART, HE RECOGNIZES NEED FOR COOPERATION WITH US AND I BELIEVE WE ARE OFF TO GOOD START, BUT HE WILL TAKE CAREFUL HANDLING. HECK

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